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ABSTRACT

The Arizona Young Authors Conference and Young Readers Award are the culminating activities in a two-year cyclical program designed to expand the reading and writing of children throughout the state. During the 1975-1976 school year, elementary school students reproduced their writing in their own bound books; Young Authors Conferences were then held at individual schools, followed by mini-conferences at local junior high schools and then by a state conference to which children from each school were invited. The 1976-1977 Young Readers Award program, which involved elementary and junior high school students in reading activities, culminated with an autograph party and ceremony at which an award was presented to Judy Blume, the author of the book chosen by the students as their favorite. During the Young Authors Conference year, school district personnel worked closely with University of Arizona personnel, a state committee provided overall coordination, and liaison persons provided practical help and information about the program to teachers, librarians, and principals. District workshops on book making and creative writing were held for teachers, and principals took an active role in the program. A second biannual Young Authors Conference was planned for the 1977-1978 school year. (GW)

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THE ARIZONA YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE AND YOUNG READERS AWARD A SCHOOL DISTRICT'S SUPPORT PROGRAM

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In Arizona, teachers, librarians, administrators, and university personnel are working together to provide an opportunity for young authors and young readers to develop lifelong interests in written language. The ARIZONA YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE and the YOUNG READERS AWARD are the culminating activities for a two-year cyclical program to expand the reading and writing of children throughout the state. The state program is coordinated by members of the College of Education, University of Arizona, under the leadership of Dr. Yetta Goodman, other faculty members and graduate student assistants.

Two exciting activities in which elementary students of the TUCSON UNIFIED DISTRICT #1 had the opportunity to participate were the ARIZONA YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE during the 1975-76 school year and the ARIZONA YOUNG READERS AWARD program during the 1976-77 school year. The major emphasis on the district level in the YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE was the opportunity for students to create stories and verse for reproducing in their own bound

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books. In each school participating in the conference, a school conference was held for the students to share their efforts and develop appreciation for the production of others. From each school students were invited to attend the state conference held at The University of Arizona. Invitations to student authors were based upon the selections all students in each school chose as their favorites during the YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE held in each school preceding the state conference.

The 1976-77 year's YOUNG READERS AWARD CONFERENCE focused on reading and provided opportunity for students to become acquainted with the authors and their published materials. Both elementary and junior high students participated. They were asked to vote for their favorite book selected from a list of twenty books previously chosen by young readers. These young readers were delighted to meet the author of their favorite book, TALES OF A FOURTH GRADE NOTHING. Following the voting, Judy Blume traveled to Tucson to receive the first AYRA award and speak to the young readers who came to meet and hear her.

Many readers from around the state, greeted at the award ceremony by their university hostess, enjoyed a memorable opportunity as they presented the ARIZONA YOUNG READERS AWARD to their favorite author. The ceremony also gained importance for the children as they saw the author honored with a gift from the governor of their state.

Following the presentation hundreds of young readers attended an autograph party. Although the line was long, children

waited eagerly so that Judy Blume could autograph copies of her books. The young readers also had an opportunity to share autographs as they happily added their signatures to the books. Before the memorable day ended, children also visited a book fair organized by university library science students.

To initiate the YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE, university personnel met with teachers and librarians to explore the philosophy upon which the conferences are based and to demonstrate techniques and materials which are useful resources in the classroom. During the YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE year, school district personnel worked closely with the university committee in the development of activities for assisting teachers to motivate and encourage students to create and produce books in the classroom.

A state committee provides overall coordination to the conference planning. Included on the state committee are persons from the local school district representing various areas of support. These include the Coordinator of Language Arts, the Coordinator of Elementary Library Services, an Elementary Curriculum Coordinator, and Elementary Principal, an Elementary Curriculum Resource Teachers, and a Junior High Librarian. The state steering committee meets throughout the year providing direction and continuity to university leadership.

District members of this committee serve as a core for program development within the district as well as participating in the state committee planning for both the ARIZONA YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE and the YOUNG READERS AWARD.

The District language arts coordinator worked closely with this team in setting up workshops and organizing materials for dissemination to teachers throughout the District. The coordinator of elementary library services worked closely with elementary librarians who set up writing and book centers in school libraries displaying books children had written as well as commercial books which included children's writing and illustrations.

The elementary principal representative served as a contact person in the elementary principal's group helping to keep principals informed about the conference as well as encouraging other principals to share this information with their teachers. The resource teacher served as direct liaison to teachers in working in the classroom with writing experiences and book binding activities.

Because of the size of Tucson Unified District #1, for the initial YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE year only elementary students participated. The junior high representatives included in the committee served as liaison to junior high librarians for the ARIZONA YOUNG READERS AWARD activities. In January 1977, plans were made for participation in a local district YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE for elementary and junior high students during the spring of 1977.

Workshops for teachers were organized by the coordinator of elementary art in the new teacher center. Materials were available for teachers to go through a process of binding books so that they could help children in their classrooms as well as teachers

in their own schools. As teachers went through a process themselves they became more knowledgeable about that process and were better able to realize the constraints involved. After these kinds of in-service the teacher became a valuable resource at a school, in supporting other teachers in helping children in reading and writing

Graduate students working with Dr. Yetta Goodman, University of Arizona, served as resources in several of the District workshops. Dr. Goodman and the graduate students shared packets of materials relating to book binding and ideas for motivating youngsters to create and develop stories and illustrations for their books. These workshops were held in late afternoon and early evening. Attendance at each session left standing room only.

In addition, District workshops on book making and illustrating as well as on motivating creative writing were given by resource personnel, librarians and classroom teachers. Children and parents as well as teachers, participated in these workshops. Later they assisted in the classrooms as children wrote, illustrated, bound and shared their books.

For YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE activities in the schools, principals, classroom and resource teachers, librarians, and curriculum coordinators worked together to assist the teachers in developing background as well as helping assemble materials for motivation and pupil involvement.

Following each school conference in the spring, students whose works were selected by students from their own school participated in two hour mini-conferences in the junior high in their feeder school cluster. The feeder school conference concept includes giving recognition to the imaginative writing of children and young people, providing opportunities for them to share their pleasure in writing stories and poems with children from other schools, and learning something about the processes of creating books of their stories and poems. In addition, since the imaginative writing is read by or to other children, the conference activities provide good reasons for young people to have purposeful practice in writing and editing skills. These conferences were follow-ups to the local school conferences.

Principals, as curriculum leaders in their schools, have taken an active role in the YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE. One principal stated,

> As the administrator of our school, I have a very strong personal commitment to children and their writing. As a supportive person in this kind of endeavor in our school, I feel that my excitement probably generates to the staff and I personally attend workshops for bookbinding and creative writing, scrounge wallpaper and cardboard used to make the book covers. I encourage children to come and read their books to me. I also share with the classrooms and make comments and perhaps help glue the cover on a book, or help correct or proofread a book that a child might be writing. I think that children who write are going to be better readers and it's one way to involve children in the importance of learning to read. How exciting it can be for them. I think also that the sharing within the building, perhaps the sixth grade visiting the first grade, is part of the excitement. At our school every child in our school wrote a book; at the end we had an awards assembly at which every child received a certificate that said, 'Hey, you're a great author. You can write books as well as anybody else'.

Occasionally, some students write class books. One seventh grade English class wrote, illustrated, published and even marketed a book of poetry called TRY. The teacher explained the process:

> We began our project about five months ago reading different types of poetry in class. We discussed differences between different types of poetry and prose and invited a poet into our classroom to discuss these things with us. Her name was Haley Matlock and she showed us a book that she actually published herself. She did all of the art work and all of the writing. The kids became really interested in this and decided to do a book of their own. They spent about a week writing in class and then we had our poet friend help us edit the poetry. When this was finished, three of the girls in the class who had become quite expert at caligraphy, thanks to our art teachers, copied everybody's poem over by hand with pen and ink. When this process was done, we decided we would be ready to start printing the book. Every cover on each one of the books was hand painted by somebody in the class.
>
> One of the poems in TRY reflects the thoughtful insight and the sensitivity to words, thoughts, and feelings found on each page:
>
> The bowler stands in an aisle all alone
> Holding a ball with just three holes
> His concentration works like a professional should
> He walks forward lowering the ball, lets it go
> leaving it all alone
> He then waits hoping for a strike
> And suddenly the moment comes.

As a culmination to the local school's YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE students are invited to represent their school at the State Conference held at the University. When chosen to represent schools at the University the YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE writer becomes a resource person for his school.

The conference provides the opportunity to meet many other student authors and to share the treasure of one's own authorship. As children proudly carried their final production to the conference they found time to share their endeavors with others waiting outside the conference building. The magic of a good book assured involvement even before the conference began. Sharing one's writings with interested university professors was part of the conference experience, and interacting with an author, such as Bill Martin, Jr., whose writings they already knew, made the conference particularly meaningful.

Students and teachers are looking forward to a third annual conference for the 1977-78 school year, scheduled for March 16. Again, students from throughout the state will represent their schools in the biannual ARIZONA YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE held at the University of Arizona and coordinated by staff members of the College of Education, University of Arizona. The cooperative college and school effort has benefitted students and enriched the lives of all adults participating in this worthwhile program.

Children, parents, teachers, administrators, and university personnel are funding that the opportunities afforded through the YOUNG AUTHORS CONFERENCE and the YOUNG READERS AWARD truly help children develop life-long interests in written language.